

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L TEHRAN 3654

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: SHUM IR
SUBJ: HUMAN RIGHTS: STATUS OF THREE PRISONERS

REF: A. STATE 97336, B. 77 TEHRAN 9692, C. 77 TEHRAN 1889

SUMMARY: ALL THREE PRISONERS MENTIONED REF A REMAIN IN PRISON AS FAR AS WE KNOW. CASES AGAINST TALEQANI AND HAJEBI MORE SERIOUS THAN THAT AGAINST RAHMANI-NEJAD. P.E.N. MIGHT BE ENCOURAGED TO APPROACH GOI DIRECTLY. END SUMMARY.

1. FOLLOWING IS BASIC DATA ON NASSER RAHMANI-NEJAD: A WRITER, HE HAD BEEN INVOLVED WITH LEFTIST GROUPS FOR SEVERAL YEARS PRIOR TO HIS ARREST IN NOVEMBER 1974 AND TRIAL FOR ADVOCATING COMMUNISM AND ANTI-STATE IDEAS. HE WAS SENTENCED TO 12 YEARS IN JAIL. SEVERITY OF SENTENCE PERHAPS DUE TO FACT HE HAD BEEN ARRESTED AND CONVICTED TWICE BEFORE ON SAME CHARGE. IN 1970, RAHMANI-NEJAD SERVED TWO MONTHS IN JAIL AND IN 1972 HE WAS SENTENCED TO AND SERVED A YEAR IN PRISON. HE WAS INTERVIEWED BY BELGIAN JOURNALIST YVES TOUSSAINT IN FEBRUARY 1977 AND WAS APPARENTLY IN GOOD HEALTH AT THAT TIME. RAHMANI-NEJAD TOLD TOUSSAINT THAT HE HAD NEVER BEEN A COMMUNIST OR A LEFTIST AND CLAIMED HE WAS ARRESTED BECAUSE OF HIS THEATRICAL ACTIVITIES--HE WAS ONE OF GROUP WHO PUT ON GORKY'S "THE LITTLE BOURGEOISE"--AND BECAUSE OF "CERTAIN CONDITIONS IN TODAY'S IRAN.".

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2. REFS B AND C GIVE BASIC INFORMATION ON TALEQANI AND HAJEBI (TABRIZI). VIDA HAJEBI (INCORRECTLY IDENTIFIED AS A MAN IN REF C) WAS PRISONER WHO REFUSED TO BE INTERVIEWED BY TOUSSAINT IN 1977. TOUSSAINT DID SEE HER BRIEFLY AND TOLD BELGIAN EMBASSY SHE APPEARED NORMAL. SUBSEQUENTLY, EMBASSY LEARNED HAJEBI WAS OFFERED PARDONS

ON TWO OCCASIONS IF SHE WOULD PLEDGE NOT TO ENGAGE IN ADVOCATING VIOLENT OVERTHROW OF THE SHAH. SHE REFUSED, AT LEAST ON ONE OCCASION IN SOMEWHAT ABUSIVE TERMS, AND HAS REMAINED IN PRISON. ACCORDING TO TOUSSAINT'S STORY IN FEB 19, 20 AND 21 "LE SOIR", GOI RECORDS SHOW SHE IS DIVORCED FROM PROMINENT VENEZUELAN COMMUNIST OSWALDO BARTO-MILIYANI, TOOK FOUR MONTHS GUERRILLA TRAINING IN CUBA AND KNEW REGIS DEBRAY. SHE RETURNED TO IRAN IN 1972 AND WAS PICKED UP FOR ACTIVITIES AGAINST THE REGIME. SHE WAS SENTENCED TO 7 OR 8 YEARS IN PRISON. BBC TV TEAM FOUND HER ALIVE, WELL AND WALKING NORMALLY WHEN IT FILMED HER FOR BRITISH TELEVISION IN 1977 (REF C). ACQUAINTANCES HERE INDICATE SHE REMAINS UNCOMPROMISING ON ISSUE OF PARDON FOR PROMISE NOT TO ADVOCATE OVERTHROW OF STATE.

3. AYATOLLAH TALEQANI WAS TRIED, AS REF B NOTES, ON SECURITY CHARGE, WHICH WE HAVE SUBSEQUENTLY HEARD WAS ADVOCATING OVERTHROW OF STATE. HE HAS BEEN IN AND OUT OF JAIL SEVERAL TIMES, ESSENTIALLY FOR SAME KIND OF ACTIVITIES. WE HAVE NO INFORMATION ON HIS PRESENT HEALTH OR QUESTION OF TORTURE, BUT WE HAVE HEARD CIRCUITOUSLY THAT HE HAS FOUND PRISON LIFE HARDER THIS TIME AROUND, ESPECIALLY IN VIEW OF LENGTH OF SENTENCE.

4. SEEMS TO US P.E.N. MOST LIKELY TO HAVE SUCCESS IN GETTING RELEASE OF AHMANI-NEJAD, WHILE GOI LIKELY TO
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PROVE VERY OBDURATE IN CASE OF HAJEBI AND ESPECIALLY IN CASE OF TALEQANI, WHO COULD POSE SERIOUS PROBLEMS FOR IRAN IN TERMS OF RELIGIOUSLY-INDUCED CIVIL UNREST.

5. TO BEST OF OUR LIMITED KNOWLEDGE P.E.N. HAS NOT PREVIOUSLY APPROACHED GOI ON THIS SUBJECT. WHILE WE KNOW ORGANIZATIONS SUCH AS P.E.N. DO NOT OFTEN CONSIDER DIRECT APPEALS TO GOI VERY EFFECTIVE, IN THIS INSTANCE WE WOULD URGE DEPARTMENT TO ENCOURAGE DIRECT PRIVATE P.E.N. APPEAL TO GOI THROUGH BOTH IRANIAN DIPLOMATIC MISSIONS AND OTHER PRIVATE CONTACTS. IDEAL OF COURSE WOULD BE P.E.N. REQUEST FOR P.E.N. DELEGATION TO VISIT IRAN. IF GOI ACCEPTED, THEN P.E.N. WOULD HAVE A CHANCE TO MAKE ITS CASE MORE EFFECTIVELY. DIRECT APPEAL, EVEN IF UNSUCCESSFUL IN FIRST INSTANCE, WOULD ALSO BUILD RECORD WHICH IS BOTH HELPFUL TO US AND ENCOURAGING TO THOSE IN GOI WHO ARGUE FOR LESS RESTRICTIVE, MORE OPEN POLICIES.

6. ALTERNATIVELY, AMERICAN P.E.N. MAY WISH TO WORK THROUGH IRANIAN CHAPTER OF P.E.N. WHICH GOI HAS JUST RECENTLY INFORMED US (TEHRAN 3540) HAS FREEDOM TO WRITE AND PUBLISH.

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